

Message Text

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TAGS: PFOR, SA, US
SUBJECT: SAUDI PRESS ON MIDDLE EAST TRAVEL OF SECRETARY VANCE AND
US PEACE EFFORTS

1. PARAGRAPH 2 CONTAINS THE TEXT OF AN EDITORIAL WHICH
APPEARED IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARAB NEWS JANUARY 19.
ON THE SUBJECT OF A MIDDLE EAST MISSION BY SECRETARY VANCE
AND US EFFORTS FOR A MIDDLE EAST PEACE SETTLEMENT.

2. BEGIN TEXT: VANCE'S ODYSSEY

THE ANNOUNCEMENT THAT INCOMING U.S. SECRETARY OF
STATE CYRUS VANCE PLANS TO TOUR THE MIDDLE EAST WITHIN A
MONTH TO SIX WEEKS OF PRESIDENT-ELECT CARTER'S INAUGURATION
DEMONSTRATES HOW SERIOUSLY THE NEW ADMINISTRATION REGARDS
THE PROSPECTS FOR A FINAL SETTLEMENT TO THE ARAB-ISRAELI CON-
FLICT. MR. CARTER HAS SAID ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS THAT THE
CLIMATE HAS NEVER BEEN BETTER FOR A MIDDLE EAST PEACE
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PAGE 02 JIDDA 00483 220657Z

SETTLEMENT. ON THIS POINT, IF NOTHING ELSE, HE IS IN AGREEMENT WITH FRENCH PRESIDENT VALERY GISCARD D'ESTAING, WHO HAS CALLED 1977 "THE YEAR OF PEACE" IN THE MIDDLE EAST.
MR. CARTER HIMSELF APPARENTLY WANTS TO STICK CLOSE TO HOME DURING MOST OF 1977, TO LEARN THE ROPES AT THE WHITE HOUSE AND ACCUSTOM HIMSELF TO THE BYZANTINE WAYS OF WASHINGTON. HE IS SENDING AN EXPERIENCED AND TRUSTED DIPLOMAT TO

MAKE THE PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT OF THE PROSPECTS FOR A LASTING PEACE SETTLEMENT-INCLUDING A RETURN TO THE NEGOTIATIONS TABLE AT GENEVA.

MR. VANCE'S TOUR WILL BE FOLLOWED UP BY RETURN VISITS TO WASHINGTON BY VARIOUS MIDDLE EASTERN LEADERS. BY LATE SPRING OR EARLY SUMMER, MR. CARTER SHOULD HAVE A GOOD IDEA WHERE ALL THE PARTIES STAND. THE ISRAELI GENERAL ELECTIONS WILL BE OVER, AND, WITH A LITTLE LUCK, THE PUSH TOWARD A REGIONAL SETTLEMENT CAN BEGIN IN EARNEST.

THE INCLUSION OF SAUDI ARABIA IN MR. VANCE'S UPCOMING TOUR IS SIGNIFICANT IN SEVERAL RESPECTS. FIRST, IT INDICATES U.S. APPRECIATION FOR SAUDI ARABIA'S OIL PRICE STAND AT LAST MONTH'S OPEC CONFERENCE IN DOHA. THE KINGDOM HAS DONE A GREAT DEAL TO CUSHION THE UNITED STATES AND OTHER WESTERN NATIONS FROM THE EFFECTS OF RISING OIL PRICES, AND MR. CARTER SEEMS TO REALIZE THIS. AS A POLITICIAN AND FORMER BUSINESSMAN, HE KNOWS THAT FREE RIDES ARE LITTLE MORE THAN WISHFUL THINKING. THE NEW PRESIDENT IS APPARENTLY PREPARED FOR A KIND OF QUID-PRO-QUO TRADE-OFF WITH SAUDI ARABIA: SECURE AND REASONABLY PRICED ENERGY SUPPLIES IN EXCHANGE FOR U.S. PRESSURE ON ISRAEL TO REACH AN ACCOMMODATION WITH THE CONFRONTATION STATES. SECOND, THE UNITED STATES IS WELL AWARE OF SAUDI ARABIA'S INFLUENCE AMONG ITS FELLOW ARAB STATES. RECENT SAUDI DIPLOMATIC COUPS-INCLUDING THE LEBANESE CEASEFIRE AND THE EGYPT-SYRIA RECONCILIATION-HAVE DOUBTLESS CONVINCED THE AMERICANS THAT SAUDI ARABIA IS THE COUNTRY BEST ABLE TO ENCOURAGE JOINT ARAB

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PAGE 03 JIDDA 00483 220657Z

CONSENT TO A JUST SETTLEMENT OF THE MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT. END TEXT
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